AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

Please rewrite the claims as follows:

1. (Original) An autofocus apparatus comprising:

a first detection device which detects a focusing state by driving a focus lens in an object region;

a second detection device which detects a focusing state of the focus lens only near an in-focus position in previous photographing;

a memory device which stores an in-focus position and a photographing condition in photographing; and

a first control device which selects said second detection device when previous and current photographing conditions satisfy a predetermined requirement in photographing, and selects said first detection when the previous and current photographic conditions do not satisfy the predetermined requirement.

2. (Currently Amended) An autofocus apparatus comprising:

an instruction unit which instructs an autofocus operation; and

a control device adapted to, based on if there is a difference of a predetermined condition between an autofocus operation at a first timing and an autofocus operation at a second timing, which is different from the first timing, change a drive control of a focus lens for the autofocus operation at the second timing,

wherein said predetermined condition includes at least a condition other than an AF evaluation.

~~a second detection device which detects a focusing state of a focus lens only near an in-focus position in previous photographing;~~

~~a third device which divides an object region into a plurality of regions and detects a focusing state of a focus lens until the focus lens can be focused in each divided region;~~

~~a memory device which stores an in-focus position and a photographing condition in photographing; and~~

~~a second control device which selects said second detection device when previous and current photographing conditions satisfy a predetermined requirement in photographing, and selects said third detection device when the previous and current photographing conditions do not satisfy the predetermined requirement.~~

3. (Currently Amended) The apparatus according to claim 2, further comprising:

a detecting device which divides an object region into a plurality of regions and detects a focusing state of the focus lens until the focus lens can be focused in each divided region;

wherein said control device controls, during when the in-focus position in the autofocus operation at the first timing falls within a divided

region subjected to the detection of the detecting device, driving of the focus lens within the divided region.

~~wherein said second control device so controls as to select said second detection device only when the in-focus position in previous photographing exists in a divided region to be detected later by said third detection device.~~

4. (Currently Amended) The apparatus according to claim [[2]] 3, wherein said ~~second~~ control device so controls said detection device as to detect a ~~third~~ divided region including [[an]] the in-focus position in the autofocus operation at the first timing. ~~previous photographing when said second detection device is detected.~~

5. (Original) The apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the predetermined requirement is satisfied when at least one condition capable of specifying that the previous and current photographing conditions are substantially the same exists.

6. (Currently Amended) The apparatus according to claim [[5]] 2, wherein the ~~specifiable~~ predetermined condition includes any one of conditions that a zoom position is substantially the same between previous photographing and current photographing, hardly and time difference exists, a photographing mode has not been changed, an AE frame setting

is the same, brightness is substantially the same, an AF evaluation is substantially the same, white balance is substantially the same, and a portrait/landscape photographing position is the same~~, and the focus lens can be focused in previous photographing~~.

7. (Original) An autofocus method comprising:

a step A of determining whether previous and current photographing conditions satisfy a predetermined requirement in photographing;

a step B of, when the previous and current photographing conditions are determined in the step A to satisfy the predetermined requirement, detecting a focusing state only near an in-focus position in previous photographing;

a step C of, when the previous and current photographing conditions are determined in the step A not to satisfy the predetermined requirement, detecting a focusing state in an object region; and

a step D of, when an in-focus position is detected in the step B or the step C, photographing at the in-focus position.

8. (Currently Amended) An autofocus method comprising:

an instruction unit which instructs an autofocus operation; and

a control device adapted to, based on if there is a difference of a predetermined condition between an autofocus operation at a first timing

and an autofocus operation at a second timing, which is different from the first timing, change a drive control of a focus lens for the autofocus operation at the second timing,

wherein said predetermined condition includes at least a condition other than an AF evaluation.

~~a step A of determining whether previous and current photographing conditions satisfy a predetermined requirement in photographing;~~

~~a step B of, when the previous and current photographing conditions are determined in step A to satisfy the predetermined requirement, detecting a focusing state only near an in-focus position in previous photographing;~~

~~a step E of, when the previous and current photographing conditions are determined in the step A not to satisfy the predetermined requirement, dividing an object region into a plurality of regions and detecting a focusing state in each divided region; and~~

~~a step F of, when an in-focus position is detected in the step B or the step E, photographing at the in-focus position.~~

9. (Original) An image apparatus comprising an autofocus apparatus comprising an autofocus apparatus defined in claim 1.

10. (Original) An image sensing apparatus comprising:

an optical system having a focus lens; and

a control device which determines whether previous and current image sensing conditions coincide with each other, on the basis of a parameter in previous image sensing operation that is stored in a memory in advance and a parameter in current image sensing operation,

when the previous and current image sensing conditions are determined not to coincide with each other, scans the focus lens in a predetermined range, thereby acquiring an evaluation value representing a focusing degree, and

when the previous and current image sensing conditions are determined to coincide with each other, scans the focus lens in a range which includes an in-focus position of the focus lens in previous image sensing operation that is stored in the memory in advance and is narrower than the predetermined range, thereby acquiring an evaluation value representing a focusing degree.

11. (Original) The apparatus according to claim 10, wherein the predetermined range includes an entire range scannable by the focus lens.

12. (Original) The apparatus according to claim 10, wherein the predetermined range includes a range obtained by dividing a range scannable by the focus lens into a plurality of zones, and when the in-focus position of the focus lens is not determined, said control device scans the focus lens in a new zone.

13. (Original) The apparatus according to claim 10, wherein the parameter in image sensing operation includes at least one of information on a zoom lens position, photographing time, photographing mode, information on an AF frame setting, information on an object brightness, information on an AF evaluation value, information on a white balance control value, information on a portrait/landscape position of the image sensing apparatus, and information on whether the focus lens has been focused in previous image sensing operation.

14. (Original) An autofocus method comprising:

determining whether previous and current image sensing conditions coincide with each other, on the basis of a parameter in previous image sensing operation that is stored in a memory in advance and a parameter in current image sensing operation;

when the previous and current image sensing conditions are determined not to coincide with each other, scanning a focus lens in a

predetermined range, thereby acquiring an evaluation value representing a focusing degree; and

when the previous and current image sensing conditions are determined to coincide with each other, scanning the focus lens in a range which includes an in-focus position on the focus lens in previous image sensing operation that is stored in the memory in advance and is narrower than the predetermined range, thereby acquiring an evaluation value representing a focusing degree.

15. (Original) A program causing a computer to execute an autofocus method defined in claim 14.

16. (Original) A storage medium computer-readably storing a program defined in claim 15.

17. (New) An image apparatus comprising an autofocus apparatus comprising an autofocus apparatus defined in claim 2.